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Press Release

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Coast Guard Tests Second Facility for HH-65 Engine System Replacement

WASHINGTON – On Dec. 15, the Coast Guard transferred a HH-65 Dolphin helicopter to the American Eurocopter Facility (AEC) in Columbus, Miss to re-engine the aircraft. Upon completion of this test case at AEC, Integrated Coast Guard Systems (ICGS), and the Coast Guard will be able to determine whether the new AEC facility is suitable to serve as the site for a second re-engining production line.

The Coast Guard's HH-65 helicopters are experiencing power losses at an unacceptable rate (172 in fiscal year 2004, compared to a total of 55 in the previous three years). The project must be completed as soon as possible if the Coast Guard is to remove operational limitations on the HH-65 fleet and to mitigate risks to Coast Guard aircrews and the maritime public who rely on the aircraft for search and rescue, fisheries patrols, maritime security, and other Coast Guard missions.

The Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2005 directs the Coast Guard to re-engine all operational HH-65s in 24 months. The Coast Guard's goal in satisfying this requirement is to resolve significant safety and reliability concerns that impact the aging helicopters, but accelerating the HH-65 re-engining project depends upon the availability of funding, conversion kits, engines, and suitable production facilities.

Currently, the Coast Guard's sole HH-65 re-engining facility is the Aircraft Repair and Supply Center (ARSC) in Elizabeth City, N.C. The success of the Mississippi facility test run is essential to achieving the 24 month re-engining objective.

ICGS determined that AEC provided the best value as an additional candidate to perform HH-65 re-enginings.

ICGS also determined in early December that suitable numbers of conversion kits for HH-65 engines were available, allowing the Coast Guard to move forward with its evaluation of the AEC's new facility as a second production site.

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